

Living in Christ: Finding Peace with God

Lesson 1 Knowing Christ

Whether you have just become a Christian or are renewing your commitment to Christ, it's good to review some basic truths about Jesus Christ and the salvation He offers.

Our Need for Salvation

Though you may know many people who seem to be "better" than others, all of us make mistakes (Romans 3:23). The consequence of human sin and imperfection is eternal separation from God, who is holy and perfect. And since God is the very source of life, eternal separation from Him means eternal death (Romans 6:23).

----- Promise 1: The Promise of Salvation

The Bible talks about "salvation," which means being saved from eternal death and experiencing peace with God and living forever with Him. John 3:16, perhaps the best-known verse in the Bible, explains clearly that by believing in Jesus Christ you can have salvation and eternal life:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." --John 3:16 (NIV)

Look at this verse, one phrase at a time, to better understand the simple truth it proclaims:

"For God so loved the world ..."

The "world" includes you and every other individual on the face of the earth. God loves you, and the next part of the verse shows just how much He loves you:

"... that he gave his one and only Son ..."

God loves you so much that He gave His Son (Romans 5:8). Jesus Christ, the Son of God, paid the penalty for your sins when He died on the cross. He took all your sins and died once for all. As He died He said, "It is finished" (John 19:30), meaning that He had truly done everything necessary for your salvation.

As the "Son of God," Jesus is equal to God Himself. He is part of what theologians call the "Trinity": God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Amazingly, however, even though Jesus was equal to God the Father (John 1:1-3; 10:30), He freely chose to become a human being and die for us (Philippians 2:5-8).

"... that whoever believes in him shall not perish ..."

If you believe that Jesus Christ is God's Son, and accept Him as your Savior, you will not have to pay the eternal penalty for your sins -- because Jesus paid that penalty for you when He died on the cross.

"... but have eternal life."

Instead of eternal death and separation from God, you will have eternal life the moment you trust Christ. You can know that:

- your sins are forgiven (Colossians 1:14)
- you are a child of God (John 1:12)
- you possess eternal life (John 3:16)

Committing Your Life to Jesus Christ

Have you personally trusted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? If so, then on the authority of God's Word you have eternal life. If not, you can trust Him right now (Romans 10:13)! You can receive Jesus Christ into your life right now by praying a prayer such as this:

Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner and I need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died for my sins. I want to turn from my sins. I now invite You to come into my heart and life. I want to trust and follow You as Lord and Savior. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Memorize John 3:16, and if you ever have occasion to doubt your salvation, use it as an anchor for your faith!

Promise 2: The Promise of Victory Over Temptation

Satan does not want you to be in relationship with God. He will concentrate on some area of spiritual weakness in your life to pull you down. Don't be surprised when this happens! Instead, learn to take your eyes off your own weaknesses and put your trust in Jesus Christ, who is able to help you. God promises you will not be tempted more than you can bear (1 Corinthians 10:13).

You may think that you are the only one who is tempted, but all believers go through similar tests. Temptation is not a sin. Even Christ was tempted (Hebrews 4:15). The sin comes only when you give in to the temptation.

To overcome temptation, take the problem to God immediately, before it has a chance to take root. Be positive in your prayers. Don't concentrate on the thing that is tempting you, but think about godly things (Philippians 4:8).

Ask God to bring such experiences and thoughts into your life. Meditate on 1 Corinthians 10:13 and rely on its promises whenever you are tempted.

Promise 3: The Promise of Forgiveness

Learning to live the Christian life is like learning to walk. There will be many ups and downs, especially in the beginning (Psalm 37:23-24).

When you were learning to walk, you often fell down. But did you stay down long? No, you reached out to the extended hand of your mother or father, who put you back on your feet. You can learn to walk with God the same way. When you fall, reach out to God through prayer, and accept His merciful helping hand:

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." --1 John 1:9 (NIV)

Whenever you do something that displeases the Lord, as soon as the Spirit of God has made you aware of it, make things right with God. As you do this you will come to know -- firsthand! -- the mercy and forgiveness of God and the joy of being in constant fellowship with Him.

Memorize 1 John 1:9 and practice it daily. Take God at His Word and believe Him for forgiveness and cleansing.

Promise 4: The Promise of His Presence

Because you are human, it will be natural for you to doubt, to be frustrated at times, and to feel weak and all alone. But you are never alone; Jesus Christ is in you and He wants to help you become the kind of person He created you to be (Philippians 1:6).

He will meet your every need and will take care of you daily (Hebrews 13:5).

Jesus knew His followers' weaknesses and need for greater spiritual strength. He wanted them to know that, even though He would not be present with them personally, the Holy Spirit, whom we have seen is a part of the Trinity, would take His place and meet their every need (John 14:16).

The Holy Spirit can be your Counselor or, as some Bible translations read, your "comforter." He can also be your teacher. As you read your Bible and ask God to help you understand it, the indwelling Spirit will guide you into the truth (John 16:13). He will also lead you (Romans 8:14), enrich your spiritual life (John 6:63; Romans 8:11), and empower you for Christian living (Galatians 5) and for dynamic witness to others about your faith (Acts 1:8).

The promises of salvation, of victory over temptation, of forgiveness, and of God's abiding presence are yours this very day. Practice God's presence, believe His promises, and walk in absolute dependence on His indwelling Holy Spirit.